

Strategies for COA/Commission Communication

Professional Services Division

February 14-15, 2007

Overview of this Report

Among the recommendations that were made by the COA and the Work Group was to improve communications between the Commission and the Committee on Accreditation. This agenda item presents some options for consideration by the Committee in an effort for staff to prepare an agenda item for the March Commission meeting.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Committee provide direction on a plan to ensure improved communication between the Commission and the Committee on Accreditation.

Background

At the July and September 2006 Commission meetings, the Commission adopted the set of recommendations to revise the accreditation system as presented by the Committee on Accreditation and developed in conjunction with the Accreditation Study Work Group. Among the recommendations was included a recommendation to improve communications between the Committee and the Commission. The intent of that recommendation is to ensure sufficient two way communication between the two bodies.

A number of ideas were discussed briefly by the Commission, but no specific plan was adopted. The Commission directed staff to work with the COA to draft a plan as to how that improved communication could take place. Below are some ideas for COA consideration and discussion.

Upon the conclusion of this discussion, staff will compile the comments and suggestions from COA and prepare an agenda item for the Commission's March 2007 meeting.

Possible Strategies:

- 1) *Maintain the Annual Report to the Commission.* The Education Code requires that the Committee on Accreditation report to the Commission annually. In addition, this annual report provides members of the public and policymakers with a single reference document on the accreditation activities that have taken place in a particular year.
- 2) *Alter the Annual Report to the Commission to reflect the revised system.* The accreditation cycle has changed significantly with the adoption of the revised accreditation cycle. The new annual report to the commission could include summary information about biennial reports, program assessment, and the results of site visits. In addition, in the first few years of operation, staff and the Committee on Accreditation could include information about the successes and challenges of implementing the revised system, evaluation information collected from the field on

the new system, and information on adjustments that are made to refine the process. As the system continues to full implementation in the coming years, evaluation information might be a standard part of the annual report to provide the Commission with critical information on the implementation of the system.

- 3) *COA Co-Chairs or their designee from the Committee make additional presentations to the Commission regarding Committee activities.* The Committee has discussed this option on several occasions and there appears to be general agreement. Also clear is that the Committee does not favor attending every Commission meeting, but rather to appear only when there is sufficient information to present. It may be helpful for the Committee to establish a general guideline for determining when a Committee report is desired. For instance, the Committee might suggest a quarterly schedule, a twice-yearly schedule, or a schedule that includes a report after each COA meeting in which accreditation decisions are made. Other possibilities would include staff presentations when no one from the COA is available.
- 4) *The Commission Chair appoints a liaison from the Commission to the Committee on Accreditation.* The Commission discussed this option and there appeared to be general support for this. The liaison would receive all agenda materials, be invited to each meeting, could participate in all discussion, but would not have a vote on accreditation decisions. The liaison would have the responsibility to report to the Commission at each meeting on the activities of the Committee. Options 3 and 4 could work in tandem, with the Co-Chairs primarily responsible for reporting to the Commission, and the liaison offering additional comment and observations.
- 5) *Staff could provide a written summary update report to accompany the oral reports provided in #3 and 4 above for inclusion in the Commission agenda.* This information could be used later in compiling the Annual Report. These reports would focus on activities and actions taken by the Committee since the last report to the Commission.
- 6) *Other Possible Kinds of Reports.* With the new kinds of reporting requirements of the revised accreditation system (biennial reports, 4th year program assessment, site visit, and follow up), the Committee is encouraged to think beyond annual reports to communicate important information collected at these various stages. Given sufficient staff resources, what kind of information would be critical to capture and summarize for the Commission?

Although communication with the members of the Commission is the immediate request of this agenda item, the members of the Commission and policymakers have urged a transparent system of accreditation. The use of the Commission's web page for access to accreditation documents will be a useful tool. Are there other means of communicating successfully with policymakers and members of the Commission to help facilitate the understanding of the new system?